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PRIZE ESSAY  
ON  
WAR.  

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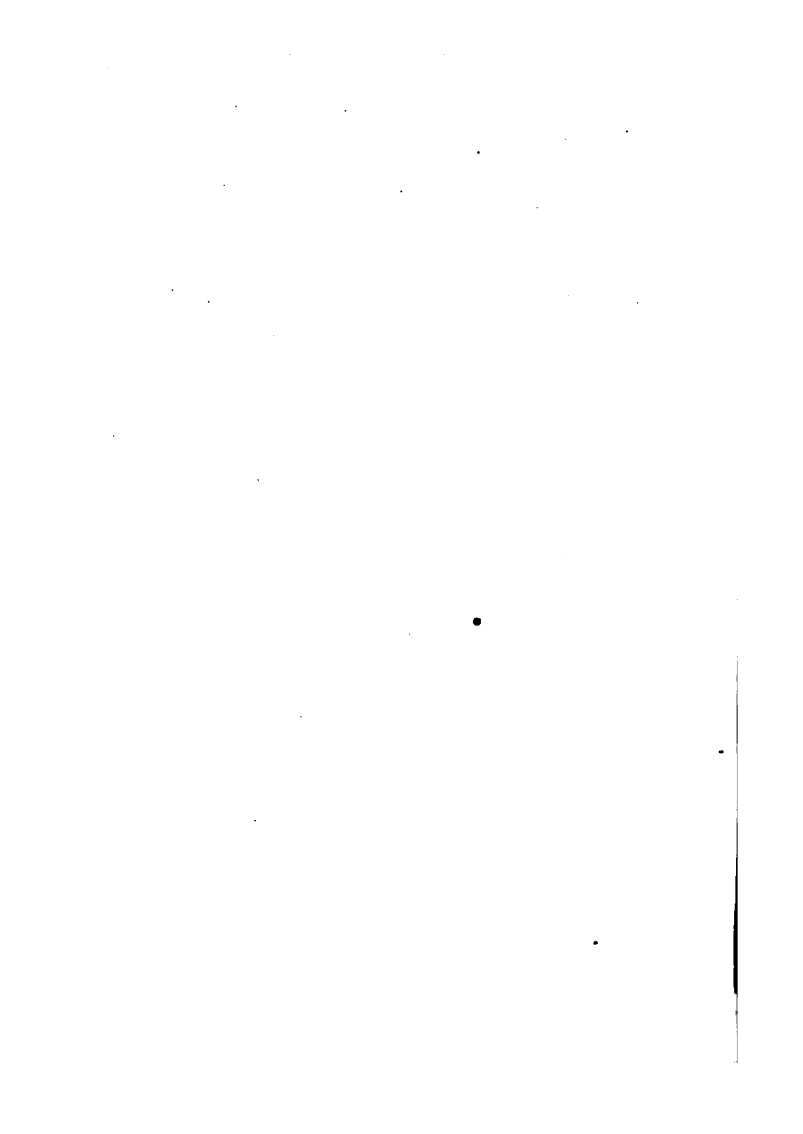
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**THE**  
**EXPEDIENCY OF PRINCIPLE.**

LONDON:  
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Prize Essay on Article xxxvii. of the Church  
of England.

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THE  
EXPEDIENCY OF PRINCIPLE.

AN ATTEMPT TO SHOW

*What is Erroneous or Defective in the Thirty-seventh  
Article of the Church of England,*

IN ITS TEACHING ON THE LAWFULNESS OF WAR,

AND

WHAT IS THE CHRISTIAN'S DUTY UNDER SUCH  
CIRCUMSTANCES.

BY THE  
REV. G. BARKER.

LONDON:

A. W. BENNETT, BISHOPSGATE STREET WITHOUT;  
N. H. COTES, 139, CHEAPSIDE.

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1862.





## PRIZE ESSAYS.

**T**WENTY POUNDS for the best, and TEN POUNDS for the Second-best Essay, showing from the general spirit and tenor of the New Testament what is erroneous or defective in Article XXXVII. of the Church of England, which teaches "that it is lawful for Christian men, at the commandment of the Magistrate, to wear weapons and serve in the wars ;" and what is the Christian's duty under such circumstances? No Essay should exceed three sheets 12mo.

SIR W. C. TREVELYAN, Bart.

Rev. Dr. THOMAS, *President Baptist College, Pontypool, and*

Rev. N. MCMICHAEL, D.D., *of Dunfermline,*

have kindly consented to be the judges. Each Essay to have a Motto and Initial Letters, with a sealed letter giving the name and address of the Author enclosed, and to be sent on or before the 1st of August, 1861, to Mr. Cotes, 139, Cheapside, London. The successful Essays to be the property of the proposers: the unsuccessful Essays, with the sealed letters unopened, to be returned on application.

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## PRIZE ESSAYS ON WAR.

In April, 1861, a proposal was made to offer Two Prizes for the best Essays, "showing, from the general spirit and tenor of the New Testament, what is erroneous or defective in Article XXXVII. of the Church of England, which

teaches that 'it is lawful for Christian men at the commandment of the magistrate to wear weapons, and serve in the wars;' and what is the Christian's duty under such circumstances."

In accordance with this proposal, essays were sent in from England, Scotland, Jamaica, Canada, and the United States of America—and, ultimately, the following award was given :—

"Nearly fifty Essays have been submitted to our examination, and it affords us much pleasure that, speaking in general terms, we can report very favourably of their merits, as respects ability and research.

"We assign the first prize (£20) to the author of the Essay with the title 'The Expediency of Principle.'

"We assign the second Prize (£10) to the author of the Essay with the title 'Peace or War, and Why and How?' The Essay with the title 'The Divergence of Article XXXVII. of the Church of England from the spirit and tenor of the New Testament,' stands so high in our estimation that we earnestly recommend its publication.

"W. C. TREVELYAN.

"N. McMICHAEL, D.D., Professor of the History of Doctrines to the United Presbyterian Church.

"THOMAS THOMAS, D.D., President of the Baptist College, Pontypool.

"*5th March, 1862.*"

## P R E F A C E .



THIS little book is offered to the reader as a small contribution to the world's search for Truth. Though of such humble dimensions, yet the questions discussed in its pages are of the gravest importance ; and the writer confidently commends it to the attention of every thoughtful Christian, feeling that, however lowly in appearance or feeble in execution, the very gravity of its subject will secure it, with such, a serious perusal.

The writer deems it due to himself to state, that he has aimed rather at describing the process by which he was ultimately led

to his convictions on the subject of Peace and War, than at defending his conclusions. This will account for some features in the style of the Essay. And now it is solemnly commended to the attention of the Church of the Lamb, and to the superintending care of the Eternal Spirit, with fervent prayer to Almighty God, that it may aid in the spread of "the truth as it is in Jesus."

G. BARKER.

*Leighton Buzzard,  
29th April, 1862.*

## THE EXPEDIENCY OF PRINCIPLE.

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### I.

Of all the calamities that can visit a nation not one is so terrible as war. This, on all hands, is undisputed. Even among those who, making a difference between war and war, plead for *just* wars—the general position is freely admitted, that all war is an evil, and cannot be too strongly deprecated. We say *no* calamity is so deplorable, and we have small fear of contradiction. No other affects a nation for evil in such a multitude of ways, to such a fearful extent, or with such permanent results. It is a giant plague, that seems to gather into itself every other plague and disaster that can afflict humanity, only to let them loose among the hapless men through whose land it makes its deadly march. Wisely did the Hebrew monarch (2 Sam. xxiv. 14) choose pestilence rather than war, as the punishment of his sin ; for it was a thousand-fold less a curse or calamity

to his land, than would have been the very mildest, and even a victorious war.

It is unquestionable that, by different minds, war is very differently estimated, according to the point of view from which it is regarded, and according as we catch sight, most prominently, of its commercial, physical, or moral results. But, though from any point of view, and in any one of these aspects, it will be seen to be sufficiently horrible; yet it is only when we gather into one picture *all* its consequences,—the commercial disaster, the convulsion of society, the physical suffering, the destruction of life, and the general loosening of morals, which war always involves, that we make any approximation to a correct conception of the tremendous evils wherewith it afflicts mankind. Visit the field of strife, and what do we see? A sight which turns our whole heart sick, and makes us ashamed of our common humanity:—men, brothers, made of the same blood, by the same Almighty hand; now charged to the full with the malicious and vengeful spirit of fiends; madly struggling in mortal conflict to take each other's lives, by every device that cunning, revenge, selfishness, and science can frame. See it

after the strife is over, as drowsy winds struggle to sweep away the clouds of mist that overhang the blood-sodden spot, and the sun throws a sickly, stifling glare on—what? — men, brothers, groaning, dying, dead! men, from whom the very lineaments of man have been carved away; in whom the fountains of life have been torn open; men, who, but for the demon war, had been the very strength and flower of their country;—now thickly sown in death, by each other's hands, their life-blood oozing forth to fatten and fertilize the land on which they have fallen. See it when those ghastly carcases have been removed, and the vulture has ceased to glut himself on the banquet man had prepared him!—see that country through which the god of war has just stalked! but lately it was a scene of beauty, industry, and peace; now it is a desert of black and smouldering ruins, peopled with houseless inhabitants, ever breathing, from the reeking battle-field, pestilence and death!

But does this view gather up *all* the evils of war? do those evils never travel beyond the field of strife? Alas! would it were so. But far, very far from that fated field, those evils are keenly felt. A thousand bleeding



hearts bewail their reign. A thousand houses of woe and garbs of mourning tell how they are felt. Wives made widows, parents made childless, lovers violently separated ere they had sealed their love with the bridal kiss ;—these are part of the tribute ever paid for the glory of war.

Go further, move into the heart of society, and we find trade stagnant, commerce stifled, artisans unemployed, provision dear ; poverty, destitution, and discontent rampant. The war, distant though it may have been, has sown its evil seeds, in the shape of restlessness, murmuring, and contention, which only wait opportunity to grow, in their turn, into anarchy, strife, and bloodshed. But when all these evil results have been seen, there will still remain behind, unacknowledged, and not so easily detected, others, *many others*, quite as dire, and more fatally permanent. It is not within the scope of any other calamity to involve such terrible consequences as those which invariably follow war. And, after all that has been said on other points, among the very worst of these, we are disposed to rank its effect on the morals of a country. A commercial panic, a succession of bad harvests, or a sweeping plague, may

spread poverty and mourning; but not one of these is *necessarily* connected with increased laxity of morals: nay; *these* may, indeed, lead to increased virtue, and to the stamping of a deeper and more earnest tone on the religious sentiment of a nation; but war, by the spread of its selfish, vengeful, ambitious spirit, ever calls into play the lowest, basest passions of fallen human nature; fosters idleness and discontent; encourages disregard for human life; and, by consequence, a contempt for eternal things; and not only retards, but positively throws back, the progress of civilization.

We confess to anxiety to enlist sympathy against war and the war-spirit, therefore we advance one other thought toward the illustration of its evil character. Let us remember that it always has its origin in evil, evil only. The apostle James, speaking on this point, says, "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not." (Jam. iv. 1, 2.) War, then, originates in the corrupt passions and inordinate desires

of man. It is always the outworking of cupidity, ambition, and revenge. These principles lie at the root, and mark the growth, of every war that is waged. It is simply the evil fruit of an evil tree; or, without figure, it is the outbreak and lawless rule of the meanest passions of humanity;—the child of sin, the nursling of hell. It is possible, we know, and common, to partially conceal all these evils beneath a specious garb of high-sounding phrases, noble purposes, patriotic ends. But war can never be made other than the accursed thing it is. It can never be shown to be, in any case, the result of piety; the natural outworking of civilization, benevolence, or morality. It must be admitted still to be simply the embodiment of man's worst vices; and the most terrible form in which those vices are ever incarnate.

The considerations just reviewed,—and their truthfulness is all but universally admitted,—seem alone sufficient to make any Christian man pause and think, ere he in any way lends his sanction to war. They lead us to hope too, that what further may be written on the topic proposed, will not be deemed unworthy of attentive perusal by thoughtful minds: and they form an ample

apology, if any were needed, for taking up the subject in the form propounded at the head of this paper.

The writer is aware that by many it will be thought an invidious and uncharitable work, thus to take up the received creed of an important and useful Christian community, and put it to the test, as though we doubted its truthfulness. But, though in no spirit of reprehension or acerbity, it is precisely because we do *doubt* the Christian truthfulness of the latter part of the 37th Article of the Church of England; and because we think it of paramount importance that our standards of orthodoxy should be above suspicion of being erroneous, that we propose to examine it.

Let the writer speak a word for himself:—he has no quarrel with the Church of England: he will be wronged and misunderstood if it be supposed that he is animated by hostility to her, or by any desire to prove that her principles are erroneous. In fact, he yields to none in his respect for her vital Christianity, her pure doctrines, her numbers of learned and godly ministers, and her great usefulness. In proposing to examine one portion of her received creed, and to inquire whether it be as scriptural, as he is con-

vinced other portions are, he is sure he proposes to do no more than is desired of all, by every true Churchman; and was embraced in the desire and design of those who first drew up her Articles. But, indeed, apart from this consideration, nothing can be a more legitimate subject of criticism than the published creed of a community or an individual. Such a creed is put forth by its supporters, in all confidence of its entire truthfulness: it courts inquiry; it appeals to our judgment and conscience; it asks us to examine it in the light of the documents from which it professes to be drawn; it invites us to judge between creed and creed, and say which is supported by weight of testimony. In such a case, there ought to be, on the part of the supporters of a creed, no shrinking from honest criticism, however close and trenchant it may be, but rather a willingness to submit to it, for the truth's sake. The Articles of the Church of England are put forth for the acceptance of the nation, and though they do not profess to embrace *all* truth, yet they certainly claim to embody the truth of God on the points on which they treat, and to be an exposition of the Church's teaching on those points: yet

it is not expected that men should render a blind and unquestioning submission to those teachings, but rather that they should try them by the written Word; receiving them with all readiness of mind, and "searching the Scriptures daily whether these things be so;" to the end they may render an intelligent acquiescence, and be prepared to give to him that asketh, "a reason of the hope that is in them." Criticism, in this case, is underlaid and animated, not by the narrow and hostile spirit of the dogmatist, but by the meek docility of the inquirer after truth.—The writer trusts it is in this latter spirit he comes to his work, while he proceeds to inquire "what is erroneous or defective (when tested by the general spirit and tenor of the New Testament) in the 37th Article of the Church of England, which teaches that 'it is lawful for Christian men, at the command of the magistrate, to wear weapons and serve in the wars;' and what is the Christian's duty under such circumstances."

It will be seen, from the manner in which the subject is stated, that our appeal must be to Holy Scripture. In discussing the question we shall be insensible to anything that can be urged, *pro* or *con.*, from any other

quarter whatever. It must be remembered that we are dealing with part of a *Christian* creed ; a creed which recognizes the supreme authority, and doctrinal sufficiency, of the Christian Scriptures ; which professes to deduce all its teachings from those scriptures, and to embody the principles of those *scriptures only* in the points embraced : it therefore fairly claims to be carried to the written Word of God, and by it alone to be tried ; and, no matter how strong may be the arguments drawn from other sources, in its favour or against it, it may justly repudiate such support or assault, and lean solely and steadily on the declarations of Holy Writ. In favour of defensive war and of the military profession, arguments from expediency have always played a prominent part. The writer need not be supposed to be ignorant of this, or to despise such arguments ; on the contrary, if looking at the subject from another point of view, he would feel himself bound to examine in detail all that can be urged from those premises ; but now, having to do with an assertion which professes to derive its authority simply from the Bible, he feels himself justified in ignoring any other ground of authority whatever.

There is, indeed, another reason, in the very language of the Article itself, for making our appeal solely to Scripture. The Article states what *Christian men* may do. It is not a question of what men may do who do not possess the documents of Christianity, or who do not own their authority, but of what those may do who own no higher authority, no conflicting authority, no equal authority, and, in matters of conscience, no other authority. The question is relative to one who declares that the divine law is the only measure and limit of his actions, to him the sole ultimate standard of right and wrong. If, therefore, we should judge his conduct by any other criterion, he would have an undoubted right to exclaim against, and appeal from, our sentence, to those laws whose supreme authority alone he owns, and by which he professes to have framed his life. In deciding, then, what Christian men may or may not do, we are obligated to inquire of the oracles of God; and if there be Christian men, who, overlooking the paramount authority of those oracles, or, led by tradition or social influence, have suffered themselves to be brought into collision with them, we cannot help it. We are not bound to follow



them, and answer for them the reasons by which they attempt to justify their mistaken position. It is enough that we show them that their great error lies in having adopted another rule of faith and practice than that by which they ought to have remained.

It behoves us to state that we entirely concur in those parts of the 37th Article, which claim for the chief magistrate of the realm, authority to rule. We firmly maintain that Christian men, as other men, are bound to obey the laws of their country. Such deference to the civil power is made obligatory on them not only by reason, self-interest, and general expediency, but by that highest law of the Divine will, to which the Christian man ever makes his final appeal. We maintain that civil government is an ordinance of God, "for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of them that do well;" and that Christian precept urges all its adherents to be submissive to the powers that be. (Rom. xiii. 1, 2, 3.) Still, be it remembered, that we emphatically deny that any civil power can claim at our hands an unlimited or unquestioning obedience; because there is an antecedent and a higher Authority, to whose laws we owe a prior loyalty. If the

two authorities ever come into collision, we cannot hesitate as to which must yield to the other. The human must succumb to the divine; the civil to the Christian. The "powers that be," in any nation, are only authoritative over us so long as their demands are bound by the circle of the laws of the "King of kings;" if those powers require what is forbidden by the higher law of Heaven, we have no course open but refusal to submit. In this we follow in the footsteps of the Apostles of Jesus. The lives of these men furnish a brilliant example of submission to the civil power; but when required by that power to violate the dictates of Heaven, they boldly replied, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you, rather than unto God, judge ye."

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## II.

Having thus endeavoured to justify the course we mean to pursue, and to clear the way before us, we may, without further delay, proceed to examine, in the light of the New Testament, the principle that declares that "Christian men, at the command

of the magistrate, may lawfully wear weapons and serve in the wars."

Looking closely into this declaration, the writer greatly marvels that it should form part of the creed of the Church of England, and should have been so long and generally received. In its *present* form at least—

*It is utterly inconsistent with the doctrine of God's absolute supremacy, and with Christian loyalty to Jesus.* Let it be remarked, that the occasion on which a Christian man may lawfully serve in the wars, is distinctly specified, viz., when he is commanded by the civil magistrate to do so. Two courses are, indeed, declared lawful, at the command of the magistrate, viz., the wearing of weapons, as well as serving in war; but as the former is a simple, independent act, or else a necessary prelude to the latter, and will be subsequently considered, for the present we shall to the latter confine our attention. Turning then to the declaration that a Christian man may lawfully serve in the wars, at the command of the magistrate, let us look at it. What does it mean? To what does it amount? How much does it teach? On what principle is it founded? Turn it about; read it in every possible form; weigh every word;

and is it possible to get any, but the most ugly and antichristian significance out of it? Does it mean that, providing the war be previously a "lawful" one, then the command of the magistrate is a sufficient license and justification of a Christian man's engaging in it? Or does it mean that whatever the character or purpose of the war, the command of the magistrate makes service in it lawful? That it means the latter, and not the former, is certain from several considerations: *e.g.*, it is in accordance with the latter significance that the magistrate always acts; and manifestly it might be a most inconvenient thing to do otherwise. Let us suppose it was an English principle that the sovereign could only command the services of the soldiery in lawful war. What an unpleasant restriction this would be felt to place on the authority of the supreme government! What an ignoble thing, to have its conduct canvassed, perhaps condemned, by every private in the army! What a humiliation to be under the necessity of proving the lawfulness of its conduct! and what a blow to its existence for its servants to refuse obedience to its commands! No, no; the Article is not intended to teach, does not teach, merely that

it is right to serve in "lawful" wars. That were a truism. It means more. Indeed the opinion we have expressed as to its signification, is confirmed by the fact that from the first drawing up of the Articles, in the year 1553, through various authorized editions and revisions, down to the year 1571, the 37th Article *distinctly stated* "*just*" or "*lawful*" wars were such as Christian men might lawfully serve in at the command of the magistrate. But in the year 1571, when the Articles underwent a final revision, and were reduced to the form and number in which they now exist, the word "*just*" or "*lawful*" was dropped out of the 37th; and Christian military service (what an expression!) was no longer limited to lawful wars; but was regulated by the command of the magistrate only. It seems but reasonable, therefore, to suppose that this article was intended to teach that in any war authorized by the magistrate, a Christian man might lawfully serve. Nay; such a supposition is inevitable.

Let it be understood that we express no opinion whatever about the lawfulness of some wars, and the unlawfulness of others. For the present our opinion about this dis-

tion is held in reserve. It is enough for our purpose, that by all the supporters of a war policy, such a distinction is recognized and maintained. Wars are usually regarded as possessing considerable ethical variety: some wars are called just, others unjust; there are wars aggressive, and wars defensive; tyrannical wars, and wars patriotic. And it must be admitted that the chief magistrate is found at the head of every war, whatever its character. Now is it intended to be taught that, when the magistrate commands, a Christian man may serve in the wars, however tyrannical, aggressive, or unjust? We reply, "Whatever is intended, the 37th Article *does teach that*." Now, however a man may approve of war under some circumstances, surely no Christian man can approve of this. Can he agree to hand over to the magistrate, not only his life, but also his conscience? Can he come forward ready to render a blind obedience? Ready to do the magistrate's bidding, without respect to its moral character, asking no question? Must he hold the monstrous sentiment that the magistrate can do no wrong, and therefore must be implicitly obeyed? Must he be transformed from a conscious, intelligent,

conscientious agent, into a mere machine to be worked by the will of another? "Yes," says the 37th Article of the Church of England; "when the magistrate commands, the Christian man may lawfully obey!" We naturally ask, on what is this marvellous assumption of power by the magistrate founded? In connection with the acknowledged ethical variety in war, how is his claim of invariable military obedience to be explained? It can only be explained in one of three ways: either that the magistrate is, in a given instance, infallible, and never can engage in an unjust war; or that the mere command of the magistrate makes the war just and lawful; or that, to the magistrate, the subject owes an unquestioning obedience.

The first of these three suppositions may be dismissed: it may be Roman, it is certainly not English. With regard to the second, it appears to us, that if it be true that some wars are just, they *must* depend on something beyond the mere word of a man, however exalted, to make them so; otherwise, what wars are unjust? Is not every war made by command of the magistrate? Are not the soldiers, *on each side*, in every war, so commanded? If the authority of the

magistrate alone is enough to make it right for the Christian man to wage war, and to make the war right, then there would be (how often !) the singular anomaly of two contending parties—two opposing principles, equally right: the ambitious right in seizing dominion, and another equally right in preventing or in punishing it; the thief right in stealing, and the magistrate in vindicating the rights of property ! This is too absurd. Then let us examine the third supposition, and the only remaining one which is likely to furnish any clue to the ground on which is based the statement that, at the command of the magistrate, a Christian man may lawfully serve in the wars ;—the supposition, viz., that subjects owe to the magistrate an unlimited and unquestioning obedience. Bearing in mind the age when the Article was drawn up, it will appear probable that this last is the real supposition on which it was intended to, and still does rest. How inconsistent this is with the teachings of the New Testament we shall soon see.

*The New Testament teaches that every man is personally responsible to God for his own conduct.* It declares that “ We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ ; that every



one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. v. 10); "that every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. xiv. 12); "who will render to every man according to his deeds" (Rom. ii. 6); for "every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour" (1 Cor. iii. 8). From these and kindred texts, it is manifest that the religion of the New Testament is intensely personal in its character. It can never admit of a man's sinking his individuality in a multitude, or handing over his responsibility to a second person. Without dis severing social connections, it passes through them, and sets each man by himself, with personal, untransferable obligations, to be dealt with purely in his own character, without respect to others. From the highest to the lowest, the New Testament teaches that every man must bear the consequences of his own conduct. The lowest private in the ranks is as much responsible for his position as a soldier, and for the part he has taken in action, as the chief magistrate is for authorizing war, and calling men into the field.

How, then, can it be true that any man

owes an implicit obedience to any other man, even to the chief magistrate of the nation, if it be true that there is in every case a higher authority by which he is bound, and to which he is personally responsible? Yet the 37th Article teaches that the Christian man may lawfully render such an obedience to the magistrate; and the whole military system of England is in accordance with it. We know, from his confessions, that the soldier on the field of battle often feels how inconsistent is the course he is pursuing with what he has learnt of the laws of God; but calms the inquietude of his conscience by the thought that he is not responsible for the war, that he is only fulfilling orders he is bound to obey. And the whole system in which he is found, supported by what professes to be a declaration of Gospel Truth, confirms him in his self-delusion; teaches him that Christianity thoroughly justifies him in obeying, whenever his sovereign commands. Thus the Christian man is encouraged, both by his military and his religious teachers, to think that, when he is required to do the bidding of the magistrate, he is released from all responsibility to any higher power for his conduct. He may enter the field of battle, but he is encouraged

to forget that for his presence and conduct there—for every thrust of his bayonet—every shot of his rifle—he himself will be personally answerable to God. Thus the Christian man is taught that, in military affairs, conscience has no voice; that the laws of Heaven are superseded; that the principles of the New Testament are repealed, or its rules for him, all gathered into one,—*he must obey orders*. This is certainly to destroy the New Testament doctrine of man's accountability to God; and we unhesitatingly assert, that this is the teaching of the 37th Article of the Church of England.

*The New Testament teaches that the Christian man is to regulate THE WHOLE of his conduct by the laws of Christ.* His actions are to be such, and such only, as are strictly in harmony with the principles and spirit of the Gospel (Phil. i. 27). He is taught that God must be supreme over his affections, and over all his powers (Matt. xxii. 37); and that the love of God in him is, that he keeps God's commandments (1 John v. 3). Moreover, the New Testament teaches, both by precept and example, that the conscience ought to be kept pure before God (1 Pet. iii. 16; Acts xxiv. 16). Now, how can it be

possible for any one to respect these Divine instructions, if there are times when he may or must be unreservedly submissive to the mandates of another? In this case, all possibility of consulting the Divine will is taken away. Conscientious inquiry is ignored and impracticable. After the yet unknown orders of a mere man have been accepted as binding, it will be impossible to preserve the conscience for God alone. Yet this, God emphatically demands. It will be urged, perhaps, that "war being lawful to the civil magistrate, Christianity will justify a Christian man, *in war*, in giving an entire obedience to the commands of the magistrate, even though he may not know, at the time of obeying the call to arms, what particular work he may be required to do." Well, let us admit that there may be times when it is lawful for a Christian man to fight; yet, taking into account the acknowledged ethical variety in war, we shall be compelled to confess that, before he does so, he is bound to inquire whether the war in which he is required to serve be such as is sanctioned by the written word of God. But then what becomes of the doctrine that he may lawfully fight, at the command of the magistrate? Or, if he hold

to the latter doctrine, and simply obeys the magistrate's order for war, without previous inquiry into its character, then what becomes of that supreme law, which requires him *in everything* to walk circumspectly, having respect to Divine claims, and the preservation of a pure conscience? Clearly it is superseded, set aside; as good as repealed. It seems obvious that no man can give himself up, *in anything*, to do unreservedly the bidding of another, and yet preserve for himself a sufficient area within which to do the will of God. Either the Christian man is not bound to have respect, *in all his conduct*, to God's will; or it is not lawful for him to fight at the mere command of the magistrate. But we have seen that he *is* bound always to respect God's will; therefore, it is not lawful for him to fight, at the mere command of the magistrate. We conclude, therefore, that the Article which teaches that it is lawful for a Christian man, when commanded by the magistrate, to serve in the wars, is subversive of the Scripture doctrine of God's absolute supremacy, inconsistent with Christian loyalty to Jesus; and that no man can adopt that Article as his rule without violating the plainest teachings of the New Testament.

## III.

OUR work would be incomplete without an examination of the practice of wearing weapons, a practice declared, by the Article under review, lawful to the Christian man, when enjoined by the magistrate.

We are tempted to ask, by what law is such a practice made lawful? Where, in the Christian's statute-book, is the precept that authorizes it, or the principle that permits it? Certain it is, that neither the example of Christ, nor that of his apostles, nor that of the early Christians, can be pleaded for it. Then where shall we find a plea for it, and how shall we prove it lawful?

It will probably be objected here, that, on one occasion (Luke xxii. 36), the Redeemer directed his apostles to arm themselves with swords, and, if need were, even to sell their garments to obtain the weapons. This circumstance is often appealed to as a triumphant proof of the lawfulness of wearing weapons for self-defence. And so it may be. It may be perfectly right, for instance, for the Christian missionary to defend himself

with the sword against the Numidian lion, or the Bengal tiger. But this leaves altogether untouched the question, whether it be right to wear weapons for defence against our fellow-men.

We might fairly pass by the passage just referred to, in the Gospel of St. Luke, until *those who plead for defensive war* have agreed among themselves what it really means, and whether it *can* be properly quoted in their favour. But, lest this should be misconstrued into a doubt in our own minds, we fearlessly assert that the Redeemer's direction to his followers did *not* mean that they were to arm in self-defence. We will give the grounds for this assertion. First, when two swords were brought, Jesus said, "It is enough ;" but surely *two swords* could not be enough for the defence of twelve men against a large band, armed "with swords and staves!" And if the direction referred to their future life (as all must think who carefully study the *whole* passage), still less can we suppose two swords to be enough for the disciples for self-defence, when scattered far apart in all nations of the earth. Again, when Peter drew his sword in defence of his Master, Christ instantly commanded him to put it up

again. It has been objected here, "that Peter, in fiery zeal, drew his sword for a wrong purpose; that whereas it was intended for his own defence merely, he used it to interfere with the progress of Jesus, when going to make atonement for the sins of the world;" well, grant this, *then* how are we to understand the *manner* in which Jesus commanded him to put up his sword? was it not almost, if not quite, equivalent to a prohibition of its future use, *on any occasion*? We ask any man, if Jesus had commanded you to put up your sword, urging it by the general principle, "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword," would you not have so construed his words, and from that hour have concluded that you ought to abandon your weapon? Again, we find that the disciples themselves never afterwards resorted to the sword in self-defence; proving conclusively that *they* themselves never, after the betrayal night, supposed themselves to have their Lord's authority for such a practice.

Of course it is not incumbent upon us to attempt a solution of the difficulties in Luke xxii. 36; or to hazard an opinion about the meaning of our Lord's words; it is enough that we have shown that they certainly do



NOT support the practice of wearing weapons for self-defence against man. And having done thus much, we have no hesitation in declaring that such a practice is opposed to the entire spirit of Christianity, and to all the teachings of the New Testament.

*It is incongruous with those virtues which the Christian man is especially charged to cultivate.* There is a striking dissimilarity between the ideal moral manhood, sketched in the New Testament, and that which is admired by the world at large: not so much, perhaps, from difference in the elements combined, as from the manner of their combination. That is, the relative position those elements occupy in the one and in the other. We are not sure that the most thorough worldling would object to the possession, by his model-man, of a measure of those milder graces that mark a perfect humanity; but he would certainly object to their being the fundamental, and dominant traits of his character. The world has ever worshipped something more vigorous, enterprising, and active; it has ever bowed at the shrine of the robust, the adventurous, and the heroic. It reverses the Christian order of being and doing, of suffer-

ing and waiting. Men cry "No ; give us a positive doctrine, and we will listen ; give us a task worthy of our energies, and we will be up and doing ; sound a bugle note that calls to close contests, and we will follow ; but no such effeminate, spiritless, quietistic creed as suffering and waiting ; being patient and forgiving." Need we say that this is *not* Christian ? That Christianity elevates to supremacy in the character, *not* the virtues that are active and heroic, but those which are passive and lowly ? It measures the bravery of Christian acquirements rather by the inward effort they cost than by their display : it estimates character more by the standard of Christ's beatitudes than by what we short-sightedly call "results ;" it finds the sublimest heroism in what are commonly called the passive virtues ; "in the silent endurance that hides under the shadow of great afflictions ; in the quiet loveliness of that forbearance which 'suffereth long and is kind ;' in the charity which is 'not easily provoked ;' in the forgiveness which can be buffeted for well-doing and 'take it patiently ;' in the unostentatious heroisms of the household, amidst the daily dripping of small cares ; in the noiseless conquests of

a love too reverential to complain ; in resting in the Lord, and waiting patiently for Him." (*Dr. F. H. Huntingdon.*) How utterly inharmonious these virtues are with the military profession, or an armed state, may be left to the judgment of the honest mind. We never, indeed, understood that it was deemed desirable for a "good soldier" to be "long-suffering," "tender-hearted," "meek," "forgiving," "gentle;" nor, indeed, can we conceive how such virtues would accord with his profession : yet these are the very virtues on which the New Testament lays its greatest emphasis. They are laid at the foundation of the whole Christian character. They are enjoined by the example and teachings of Him, who, "when he was reviled, reviled not again," and by precepts which command us to "put on bowels of mercies." These, surely, are virtues which not only make weapons of war unnecessary to their possessor, but are, moreover, inconsistent with his wearing them. How would the preaching of "meekness," "gentleness *toward all men*," "forbearance," sound from the lips of a man clad in mail, with a rifle on his shoulder, a sword at his side, and a pistol and dagger in his belt? We know that with all these arms, a man

might still be a living embodiment of the virtues of the Gospel, *but he would not look like it*; his appearance would give the lie to his character, and be totally inconsonant with it. He would be living in contravention of the law that charges Christian men to "shun the very appearance of evil." We conclude, therefore, that the Christian man has no right to wear weapons of war; that the example of his Master, the laws of his Lord, and the spirit he is charged to cultivate, singly and combined, forbid it.

We should like to dilate a little more on this point, for we think that from another and quite different point of view, the unlawfulness of wearing weapons of war may be seen: namely from this, *that the practice endangers the peace of society*. This seems so notoriously true that it appears almost unnecessary to attempt proof. Look, when one of two neighbouring nations increases by only a little its armaments, and what apprehension, jealousy, hate, and deadly determination to avenge any insult covertly intended, is instantly displayed by the other. Talk of readiness for war being the surest way of preserving peace! We must close our eyes to believe it. Facts are against it.

A readiness for war in one nation has always produced an equal readiness in another, until the two have stood, like savage beasts, at bay, suspicious, malicious, resentful, vigilant, waiting the moment to spring upon each other in the grapple of death. And, sooner or later, such has ever been the issue of parading weapons before each other's eyes. The practice, so far from being promotive of peace, is terribly provocative of war, leading individuals or nations to *seek* quarrels rather than to avoid them.

Take a peep into the inner life of countries where the inhabitants habitually go about armed. How little do we see there of forgiveness of injuries between man and man! What quick resentment! What appalling crimes! How common is brutal retaliation for the most trivial wrong! "It is hard to forgive, when one has a pistol in the pocket, and a knife next his shirt." We can easily believe it; revenge is so easy; and forbearance counted so mean and craven. "When the Highlanders carried arms, they fought perpetually; when we Englishmen wore swords, every tavern-night had its duel; when we Elizabethans wore daggers, stabblings were perpetual." (*Temple Bar*, vol. ii., p. 130.) May we not safely conclude that

the wearing of arms is perilous to the peace of society? Now the New Testament charges the Christian man, as much as lieth in him, to "live peaceably with all men." (Rom. xii. 18.) Does a Christian man respect this injunction when he deliberately puts on and walks abroad in accoutrements that seem to invite and challenge attack? Again, he is charged to "follow after the things that make for peace." (Rom. xiv. 19.) Is this done by conforming to a practice which has always proved itself provocative of war? We trow not.

Looking back now upon all we have said about the practice of wearing weapons, we are compelled to give a firm and decisive negative to the Article that teaches that a Christian man may lawfully conform to it.

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#### IV.

FROM a denial of the lawfulness of wearing weapons, to a denial of the lawfulness of war, is but a short step, but one it seems scarcely needful to take; for the former seems to involve the latter of necessity. Yet it will probably be urged that this, name'

lawfulness of serving in war, is the principal thing taught by that part of the 37th Article now under review; that the wearing of weapons is but an accident, arising from the mode in which wars are conducted; and that consequently the main point—the lawfulness of resisting force by force—is, notwithstanding all that has been said, left untouched. And it will be asked, “Since modern warfare does demand the use of weapons, how will it be possible to carry on war, if the use of weapons be interdicted? And how are life, property, and freedom to be defended, against rapacity and tyranny?” It will probably be urged also, that, “defensive war being naturally right, then, in spite of all that has been said to the contrary, the wearing of weapons must be right too.”

Now we freely admit the force of these objections, and are willing to look them fairly in the face. We think it unquestionable that the lawfulness of wearing weapons is certainly involved in the lawfulness of war, and *vice versa*. If the teaching of the 37th Article be right on the latter point, then we are persuaded there must be some latent flaw in our arguments against the former. *But is it?* Assuming that nothing but *bond fide*

defensive war is contemplated by it, is its teaching correct? Is such war lawful under the Christian dispensation? We are bound now to push our investigations far enough to reach a solution of this question; and we accept the obligation.

Our first utterance on this question will probably be received with entire assent, namely, this: that *There is not a single command in the New Testament that enjoins defensive war.* But we add, there is not a single incident that can be fairly pleaded for it; there is not a single expression that permits it; there is not laid down a single principle that involves it. We are aware that many apparently strong arguments in its favour, may be drawn from the *Old Testament*; but as we are dealing purely with the question, "What is lawful to a *Christian* man?" it seems but reasonable our appeal should be to the Christian Scriptures. Let it not be supposed that we underrate the Scriptures of the *Old Testament*; that we treat them lightly; that we doubt their inspiration, or question whether they possess any authority over a *Christian* man. We do none of these: we only bear in mind, what is universally admitted, that, mixed up with much that is



universal and eternal, those Scriptures contain a great deal that was designed for a temporary purpose, and a preparatory era of the world's history ; that was binding only on a certain community, for a limited period ; and that all this, as having fully answered its end, has been set aside and superseded by Christianity, and the fuller revelations of the New Testament. It is indisputable that the time of the Old Testament dispensation was one of comparative darkness, during which the world was rather preparing for the reception of complete light, than living in its possession. This should at least teach us to be cautious how we appeal to the Old Testament, on a question that the New has left unsettled. It is easy, in pursuit of pleas for a favourite policy, to break through the clear distinctions there made, between what is local and temporary, and what is universal and abiding ; but the plea is vitiated by it. A Christian man may certainly fail to find a single justification of the course he pursues in the Christian Scriptures ; and then make his appeal to the Old Testament, seizing upon some incident or law peculiar to the Jewish age and nation, and with that attempt a defence of his position. But would this be right ?

Ought not the Christian always to make his *first* appeal to the *New Testament*? If he finds support there, well; let him fortify his position by additional arguments, drawn from whatever other quarter will supply them; but if he has *no* support there, then, certainly his position must be abandoned, unless he is willing to admit that there is another authority superior to that of the Christian Scriptures.

In strict accordance with these principles we ask, where is the *New Testament* authority for defensive war? Where is the passage that teaches, that, at the command of the magistrate, Christian men may serve in the wars? We confess we have never seen it; and in all we have heard or read on the point, we have never met with a single quotation of a *New Testament* command of it. Nay, more; we have never met with a single reference to the *New Testament*, on which the supporters of defensive war were willing to *rest* their defence. So far as our experience has gone, their first appeal has always been to expediency, their second to the *Old Testament*, and their *third* to the *New Testament*. They have always first laboured to settle that war must be waged, and then endeavoured to make Holy

Writ support their conclusions. Is this a Christian course? Would any Christian be willing to form the *whole* of his religious creed in this way? If not, then why such a course on this one point? If it would be wrong for the whole creed, then it is wrong, in any one point, and with respect to any one Article of that creed.

Coming then to the New Testament, to try the teaching of the 37th Article on war, it must be acknowledged, by its most strenuous advocates, that the only support they derive thence is of a purely negative character; support derived from the silence of the New Testament on the subject, or from recorded incidents, in which, *alone*, they could really find nothing at all in their favour. A single law enjoining the defence of life, property, freedom, or home, by armed force; a single permission of; or a single divinely sanctioned illustration of it, is allowed nowhere to exist in the Christian Scriptures. Now, we maintain that this circumstance alone makes the teaching of the 37th Article questionable, and throws considerable doubt on its Christian character. It may be heathen, or Jewish, or human, but it can hardly be reckoned a Christian principle, that has to

turn to other quarters for support, with the candid confession that its weakest defence is in the New Testament. Yet such is, avowedly, the principle that teaches that "it is lawful for Christian men, at the command of the magistrate, to wear weapons and serve in the wars."

But we are by no means disposed to admit that the New Testament is silent or neutral on this doctrine; on the contrary, we maintain that it speaks out most decidedly and positively against it. In proof of this, we make our first appeal to—

*The Character and Example of the Founder of Christianity.* This, because we know that he embodied and illustrated in his life the principles he taught. His whole course on earth was an acted utterance of laws that should govern man. Every moral law the New Testament ordains was reduced to a concrete form, in the person of Jesus. He not only taught men *what* to do, but showed them how to do it.—Looking, then, at the moral character of Jesus, we ask, is there not something in it that seems directly antagonistic to the idea, that his followers might wage war? Is not his character the most unwarlike the world ever saw? Is it not

just such an one as we might expect in one who is called "The Good Shepherd;" the "Lamb of God;" the "Consolation of Israel;" the "Great High Priest;" "The Prince of Peace;" titles which, if they mean *anything*, point to the pacific character and tendency of his reign; the loving sympathy, the rich graciousness, the unrepining meekness, and the tender kindness of his character? And was not the whole of his life a lavish display of these characteristics? From beginning to end he was the meek and lowly, the peaceful and unrepining, the gentle and sympathizing. If it be asked what virtues, what particular phases of righteousness, the Redeemer most prominently exhibited in his life? The answer must be—the *passive* virtues of patience, gentleness, forbearance; and the more active ones, of forgiveness, and a love ever showing itself in kindness, and in doing to others as he would that others should do to him. It must be obvious, to every reader of the Gospels, that Jesus was far removed from that heroic standard which distinguishes the world's ideal man. The warrior's virtues—prompt obedience to the commands of a mere man, insensibility to suffering, and contempt of death—formed no part of the

character of Jesus. Yet resentment, retaliation, and revenge, were far from him; and when arrested, under the conduct of a traitor, he only rebuked that traitor with a kindly but searching reminder of past professions made, and favours received:—"Friend, wherefore hast thou come?" When he hung on the cross, there never appeared the shadow of a wish to inflict retributive sufferings on his cruel murderers; his only revenge was the prayer—"Father, forgive them: they know not what they do." In short, the portrait he has left of himself, drawn by his own hand, aptly represents every line of his features: "I am meek and lowly in heart."

We ask, Is this the picture of one fitted to serve in war? Can we conceive of such a man resisting force by force, and taking other's lives in defence of his own? Are the elements of his character those which are desirable in a soldier? "Oh," it will be replied, "Jesus was an exception: of course *he* could not serve in war." Granted; he was an exception; but are not all his followers charged to conform their lives to his? to frame their characters on the model of his? in fact, *in all circumstances*, to cultivate a spirit like his? Was he not our ensample?

“Certainly,” it is again answered, “every man ought to cultivate a character like that of Jesus, and in his personal circumstances, and private life, he ought always to evince it; but when he comes into an official position, like that of the soldier, who simply has to execute the law of the properly constituted authority, it is a different case; then personal feelings and convictions must yield to duty and the public good; just as the magistrate must pronounce a proper, legal sentence, whatever may be his personal feelings of kindness and pity toward the criminal.” But really,—passing by the principle of laying aside personal convictions of right and wrong, at the command of a man,—this is begging the whole question. How can we place the positions of a soldier and a magistrate on the same level? The two are widely and radically distinct. They have few features in common. The duties of the magistrate do not suppress, nor demand the suppression, nor necessarily lead to the suppression, of the gentler attributes of humanity, as may be often seen on the English bench, when the last dread sentence of the law has to be pronounced. The judge may show, and often does, all the sensibility, kindness, and compassion of a man

and a Christian, even while he assigns to his awful doom the criminal before him : but the soldier must kill and destroy without pity, and in a manner which awakes in himself the most terrible passions of a depraved nature, and blunts all the finer feelings of his manhood. Again, the magistrate pronounces sentence only after the criminal has been fairly tried, after every effort has been made to prove his innocence, after his guilt has been legally established : but he who goes forth to serve in war, goes forth, commonly knowing nothing whatever of the right or wrong of the war, in which he is about to engage. He engages to kill, without any inquiry, whether the hapless men who may fall by his hand, are responsible for the evils he professes to be about to correct, and simply because he is commanded to kill. Again, the office of the magistrate aims at the preservation of personal rights, the upholding of law, the maintenance of order, *and the correction of the criminal* ; while war is carried on upon the simple principle of retaliation,—the rendering of evil for evil, the resistance of lawless force by a force equally lawless. To all these must be added the one fatal difference, that the position of the ma-



gistrate is distinctly marked, and his authority recognized and enforced, by the New Testament; while those of the soldier are not.

Here, then, obtains a wide difference between the office of the magistrate and that of the soldier; one sufficiently wide, indeed, to remove them for ever from the same category. The one can be filled by a man who shall always act in perfect harmony with the Spirit of Jesus. Can the other?

We know there have been soldiers, whose Christian character has been indisputable;—men, whose high-toned Christianity we rejoice to acknowledge;—men, like Havelock and Vicars, with thousands more obscure; but can anything be conceived, more discordant with the example of Him who was “holy, HARMLESS, undefiled,” than the actions of such men, “let loose” upon the enemies of their country, and dealing death on all and sundry before them! Do not, even good men, in such circumstances, manifest much more the ferocity of the wolf, than the harmlessness of the dove? Can we suppose for a moment, that, in the midst of their work of carnage and butchery, they feel that they are carrying out the wishes, or acting in the spirit, of their Lord and Master? No. We

are thoroughly convinced that, if brought face to face with the character of Jesus, the Article which teaches that it is lawful for Christian men, at the command of the magistrate, to wear weapons, and serve in the wars, must either be maintained in unblushing defiance of its professed Author, or it must be eliminated from a Christian creed.

*We will appeal now to the active Teachings of Christ and his Apostles.* It has been urged that, "among all the instructions these have left us, there is no positive, formal prohibition of war; no declaration that men ought not to defend themselves against aggression." Very well; admit this, and what will be gained by it? It surely cannot be construed into an argument in favour of defensive or any other war. Are we to adopt the principle that, whatever the New Testament does not, in so many terms prohibit, is, therefore, lawful? If so, then polygamy, slavery, and the slave-trade are lawful. Yet whoever supposes that these are not sins, emphatically condemned by the Christian code? Besides, is it not certain that Christ left these, and numberless other evils and sins, altogether unmentioned, but to be destroyed by the silent and inevitable working of his Spirit

among men, and the truths he proclaimed ? “ Both the Master and his servants contented themselves with propounding general rules of benevolence and holiness, which, in their eventual and universal application, would put an end to every species of cruelty and oppression. They did not preach against war, or slavery, or the slave-trade, *by name* ; but they proclaimed truths and enforced principles which are invincibly repugnant to them all.”—*Rev. J. Stock.*

But we are by no means disposed quietly to grant that Christ did not prohibit war ; on the contrary, we affirm that he did prohibit it, and propounded laws directly antagonistic to it. Take these specimens of his teaching :—“ Be ye wise as serpents, and **HARMLESS** as doves” (Matt. x. 16) : “ I say unto you that ye resist not evil” (Matt. v. 39) : “ I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matt. v. 44). Could language be stronger ? And are not all these laws binding on all who profess themselves the followers of Christ, individually and collectively ? Can the Christian man have an enemy whom he is not

bound to love and bless? or is loving and blessing him compatible with shooting and stabbing him? Again, the Redeemer teaches all his followers to pray, saying, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us" (Matt. vi. 12): and urges the prayer, by telling us (verses 14, 15), "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." It is not, surely, possible to conceive of a position more repugnant to the spirit of the Gospel, than that of a man, who, if his conscience be enlightened, may be stopped by it, in his very first utterance of prayer for the pardon of his sin. Can anything be more terrible than the thought to such a man, that his own forgiveness with God is made to turn upon whether he forgives his fellow-men or not? And is it not difficult to understand how such a man, while engaged in killing his enemies, can put up the prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us?"

Again: "Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them" (Matt. vii. 12). This

precept gathers up the spirit of all those eternal principles of justice between man and man, which inspiration had previously promulgated, reduces them into one simple, easily comprehensible law, and, in that form, binds them upon man, for all ages, and in all circumstances. But does it not prohibit war? We say, unquestionably, it does; for does the Christian man, when he shoots down his enemy, do as he would be done by, could they exchange places? "Oh," it is replied, "the rule does not apply to such cases." Does it not? Then by whose authority is it so restricted in its application? Would any other law of Christianity be violated by acting upon it in such cases? If not, and we know of none that would, then it certainly does apply. "Then," it will be urged, "by this rule, we ought never to punish a criminal, as we certainly should not wish to be punished, could we exchange places with him?" This reasoning is invalid, because *the New Testament imposes upon the magistrate the duty of punishing criminals*, and to plead Matt. vii. 12, against it, would be to set up one New Testament law against another.

"But," it is again said, "the laws of Jesus, just quoted, apply to *individuals*, in

their private and personal circumstances; certainly not to the conduct of nations." To this we reply, that what is the duty of every man, must be the duty of the whole body of men. If every man in the nation is bound to forgive and bless his enemy, then the whole nation is bound to forgive and bless its enemy too. We can form no conception of a moral principle that is binding on every man in a given community, only so long as each man is considered an isolated unit, and which ceases to be binding when these units are gathered into an aggregate of the whole.

Then further: these laws of Christ must at least be obligatory on all who profess Christianity, be they individuals or nations; and though it may be impossible to point to a *really* Christian nation, it is not difficult to point to one professedly such. Then, upon *that* nation, at least, all the laws of Christ are obligatory. If we nationally profess to believe in and follow Christ, we are, surely, nationally bound to obey his laws; and there is no way of escaping the obligation, but by a national repudiation of Christianity; if, indeed, even that would free us.

But the doctrines and precepts of Jesus will derive additional force, from a consi-

deration of the circumstances in which, and the persons to whom, they were first imparted. We ought ever to remember that, at the very time he was teaching the Jews that they should not resist evil, but bless their enemies, their country was overrun, ruled over, and pressed down by a foreign power. Their national independence had long been taken from them by the Romans, who held them as a tributary people, and subject to a military despotism. Nor was the Redeemer unaware that the Jews were, at this very time, burning to throw off the tyrannous Roman yoke and to regain their freedom. He knew, that under an assumed appearance of submission, there rolled and surged a pent-up spirit of insubordination and rebellion. He knew that such were the feelings of deep and intense abhorrence with which they regarded the oppressors of their fatherland, that they were prepared to follow into the field against them any leader who could hold out a promise and prospect of success to their arms: and more, that they were actually awaiting their long-promised Messiah, with the mistaken, but confident assurance, that he would so lead them to a triumphant victory over the dominant Roman.

Yet it was to this people, in these circumstances, that Jesus preached the doctrine of non-resistance of evil, and the duty of showing kindness to enemies. We may reasonably ask, if the Jews had acted on the teachings of Jesus, could they *ever* have taken up arms against the Romans? Did not the Redeemer *know* that for them to practise his principles would be inconsistent with their making the smallest warlike effort for their freedom? And can we suppose that, with such knowledge, and still continuing to propound and urge the same principles, he did not intend to prohibit such an effort?

We have always understood, that if ever war be lawful, it is war for civil and religious freedom, against tyranny and oppression. Yet, if ever such war *be* lawful, it must have been pre-eminently so to the Jews in the time of Christ; and how singular that, by no word or implication, did he ever teach this to his oppressed countrymen, or ever in any way incite them to an assertion of their undoubted rights! What a contrast obtains between the preaching of Jesus, and that of many preachers of his Gospel in our own day! *They* believe in the righteousness of defensive and patriotic wars; and, unlike



him, manifest no hesitation about preaching it in unmistakable terms, as though it were a part of the Gospel they were sent to proclaim. It is common enough now to hear preached, from the Christian pulpit, a crusade against tyranny and oppression. What fervid prayers are put up there, for the success of patriotic arms! What glowing eulogies are pronounced on the "brave men" who have bled for their country! These preachers, undoubtedly, suppose that they have the approval of Jesus; but then are we to suppose that they possess a greater moral courage than their Master, that they dare so boldly to propound sentiments, which, if he approved, he evidently kept back? There certainly was nothing like this in the preaching of Jesus; yet, if many modern preachers are right, it is a marvel there was not. If they are right, he might, certainly, have incited his countrymen to war; and, as it would have been equally right to aid them, he might, by his Almighty power, have secured to them a victory.

Nay, more; if defensive war be right, were not the Redeemer's instructions to his nation a mistake? Were they not calculated to hinder them striking for their freedom,

rather than encourage them to do it? Was it not the inevitable tendency of those instructions to make the people think more highly of the virtues of passive resistance, forbearance, and patient submission to wrong, than of heroic efforts to overthrow or avenge that wrong? This must be admitted. Then, we say, if such is the inevitable tendency of instructions conveyed in such circumstances, by an All-wise and Omniscient Teacher, we are bound to conclude that such a tendency they were *designed* to have; and to believe this is equivalent to believing that Jesus prohibited war of every kind.

Now let us turn to doctrines enunciated by the Apostles. These men, inspired by the Holy Spirit, taught perfectly the "mind of Christ;" with the advantage to us, that what was incomplete or obscure in the teaching of Jesus, they frequently elaborated and explained. Nothing, therefore, seems more reasonable than to conclude that, if indeed it be lawful for Christian men to serve in the wars, we shall find some hint of it in their writings. At any rate, having failed to find it in the personal teachings of Jesus, we are driven, as a final resource, to those of his holy Apostles. And, let us bear in mind, it

is in these latter teachings that we have the complete development of Christianity, the complement of the canon of inspiration, the last revelation of God to man, the full, the meridian light of the Sun of Righteousness. It is to these we must look for what was lacking in previous revelations ; and to these we must now bring the doctrine in question, with the feeling that we are approaching a final standard of appeal ; and that by the utterances of the oracle we now invoke, the doctrine must either stand or fall for ever.

We must confess that we are met here with the same awkward desideratum that met us on our appeal to the personal teachings of Jesus, viz., the existence of any positive law enjoining war in defence of life, property, home, or dependants ; there is no plain and incontrovertible declaration that such war is ever lawful. The disciples, like their Master, seem to have been so occupied in teaching men the *passive* virtues, that they appear rarely to have thought of inculcating the active, patriotic, and heroic. But then it may be supposed, perhaps, that we shall not encounter that positive antagonism to defensive war principles, in the doctrine of the servants, that encountered us in the doctrine

of the Master. If there be no *law*, there may be some allusion, some incident, on which the teaching of the 37th Article may be founded, and which will redeem it from the charge of being utterly unchristian.

We are reminded, indeed, that such allusions and incidents are commonly supposed to occur in the apostolic records, and we shall have no more fitting place than this for their examination.

We shall pass by the reply of John the Baptist, to the soldier who asked him "What shall we do?" merely remarking as we pass, that the testimony of John is hardly admissible, from the fact, freely conceded to us, that he did not *fully* comprehend the design and principles of the Messiah's mission, and therefore could not be expected to announce them:—that the soldiers whom John addressed were in the Roman army, employed for purposes of aggression and conquest; that they were in Judea for the sole purpose of keeping a conquered people in subjection; that, consequently, it is as legitimate a conclusion from John's words that he approved of wars of aggression, as that he approved of patriotic and defensive wars:—that it is our duty to study Christianity in the completeness of

its principles, and not in the sermons of John the Baptist:—and, finally, that we are making our appeal to the teachings of Christ's Apostles, and not to those of his forerunner.

It has been urged that "Paul (Acts xxiii.) accepted a military escort from Jerusalem to Cesarea, to deliver himself from a conspiracy against his life." To this it is enough to reply, that he certainly did accept a military escort, precisely as a thief accepts the escort of a policeman, or as a convict accepts the escort of the hangman to the gallows,—because he could not help it. He never sought it, desired it, expected it, or thought of it. The journey to Cesarea had never entered his mind. He was a prisoner, and was never consulted about it. This incident is too trivial as evidence—too obviously far-fetched to have the slightest value in this discussion. The next case, that of Cornelius, the Roman centurion (Acts x.), is more to the point. This case would be excellent confirmative evidence that war is not *always* opposed to the spirit of Christianity, if better proof were forthcoming from other quarters, but in the absence of such proof, this too is worthless. Yet it is often appealed to thus:—"If *all* war be inconsistent with Christianity, why

did not Peter tell the Centurion so, and teach him that it was his duty to abandon his profession?" Now, let it be remembered that the assumption that Peter did *not* tell and teach the Centurion so, is perfectly gratuitous, there being not the slightest evidence to sustain it. But even granting that Peter did not mention to Cornelius the incongruity of his military profession with his Christian character, it will either prove nothing at all or it will prove too much. It may prove nothing at all in favour of the doctrine now under review, as the Apostles usually left their teachings to produce their own natural effect on the characters and conduct of those who received them: or it will prove too much, for it will prove that no war, commanded by the magistrate, however unjust and tyrannical, is opposed to the principles of Christianity; and also that Cornelius, as a part of his military duties required, might continue on occasions to worship the military standards and the image of the Emperor.

But these incidents will lose every whit of force they might otherwise have, if it be found that the doctrines enunciated by the Apostles are directly adverse to the idea that Christian men may serve in war. Let us see some of

those apostolic teachings, and judge of their bearing and tendency.—“Follow after the things that make for peace” (Rom. xiv. 19); “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men” (Rom. xii. 18); “Giving none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God” (1 Cor. x. 32); “Abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 Thes. v. 22); “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” (Gal. v. 22, 23); “The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits” (Jas. iii. 17); “Be patient toward all men” (1 Thes. v. 14); “Follow peace with all men” (Heb. xii. 14); “God hath called us unto peace” (1 Cor. vii. 15); “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Gal. v. 14); “Put off all these, anger, wrath, malice” (Col. iii. 8); “See that none render evil for evil” (1 Thes. v. 15); “He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy” (Jas. ii. 13); “Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called” (1 Pet. iii. 9); “Whence come wars and

fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" (Jas. iv. 1); "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. xii. 19-21).

These are a specimen of the New Testament teachings on our subject; and every reader of Scripture knows they are *only* a specimen, selected from an overwhelming mass of similar doctrines propounded in the writings of the Holy Apostles. These are the declared principles by which the Christian man is told to regulate his whole behaviour. There never can dawn a time, there never can arise circumstances, in which he will be released from his obligation, to be and to do in strict accordance with them. They gather up all the laws of his being, and are at once the expression of the new life that is in him, and of the rules that regulate that life. Yet, though they are a complete illustration of the laws that should govern a Christian's

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conduct, there is not a single law among them, that is not thoroughly antagonistic to the spirit and practice of waging war, even in self-defence. Embodied in an individual, these sentiments present to our view, a man whose heroism is manifested in suffering long, and being kind ; in bearing wrong with patience ; in cordially forgiving and blessing those who would injure him ; in uniform meekness, kindness, forbearance, charity ; in always maintaining the right by " speaking the truth in love," and when that fails, daring to commit his soul to God in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator, enduring, without resistance or murmuring, the pain or loss that wicked men may inflict.

How can we with such teaching before us, approve of the principle that Christian men may lawfully serve in the wars ? Every law of our holy religion cries out, that it is violated by such a principle. We must condemn it as an outrage on the pacific teachings of the Gospel of Christ ; a distortion of the laws, and a misrepresentation of the spirit of Christianity. We reject it, as the mistaken principle of an unsanctified national policy, foisted into a Christian creed, and passed off as the teaching of the Prince of peace.

## V..

WE are now prepared to consider the question, "What is the Christian's duty, when commanded by the magistrate to serve in the wars?"

To this question, after what has been said of the unlawfulness of all war, we can return but one answer;—it is his duty to meet the command with a firm, but respectful refusal of compliance. This, it is true, may involve him in unpleasant consequences, but he ought not to be deterred by these from pursuing his course of simple duty.

We do not say that he may resist, *except passively*, the authority of the magistrate. The obedience required of him may be unlawful, in which case the only right course is to refuse to obey? but it would not be equally right to resist, or refuse to bear, the penalty which may be legally imposed upon him for his non-compliance. The Christian's duty is to do what is right in the eyes of his Lord, and, if needs be, to take joyfully the spoiling of his goods for doing it.

Let it be understood, that we intend our remarks to apply also to the Christian *soldier*, actually in the army: we maintain that it is

the duty of such a man to abandon his profession, at all hazards, and to refuse, even at the cost of his life, to serve in the wars. Our opinion is based on the following principles.

1. *All war is sinful*, as has already been proved, and as it is the duty of every Christian man to refuse to take part in what is sinful, so it must be the duty of the Christian man to refuse to take part in war. This reasoning appears to us decisive, at least, its force can only be resisted by proving that its first principle is erroneous, and that some wars are *not* sinful: till this has been done, the argument must be allowed to stand, an unanswerable proof that it is the duty of the Christian man to refuse to serve in war.

2. *No government possesses the power of life and death over any man.* We live now, not under the Jewish, but under the Christian dispensation. The former established the law, "Thou shalt not kill," with certain specified limitations; a statement of some particular circumstances in which it made it lawful to take away life. Now, every reader of the New Testament knows that the latter re-enacted the same law, without its limitations. Neither Jesus nor his Apostles ever gave the slightest hint, that, under any circum-

stances might this law be exceptional. They established simply a universal, irrevocable, and absolute law against the taking of life. That the magistrate may use a certain amount of force to protect the lives and property of his subjects, is freely admitted, but he cannot lawfully go the length of putting any man to death. And as he is not himself invested with authority to take away life, so neither can he invest others with such authority. The Redeemer has carefully taught us to respect the sacredness of human life ; and, not to do this, is to violate one of the clearest laws of the New Testament. It is every Christian's duty to do this.

3. *To serve in war is incompatible with the cultivation of that character, which the New Testament makes incumbent on the Christian man.* He is not to resist evil ;—is he, *can* he be obedient to this law, while he is resisting an aggressor to the death ?—He is to be always meek and gentle ; to love, and bless, and forgive his enemy ; does he obey these laws, when he deliberately goes forth to stab or shoot his enemy ? He is to be a peace-maker ; to seek peace and pursue it, and to follow peace with all men ; are these possible, while he is lending his countenance and aid

to roll on the tide of a bloody strife? He is not to mix himself up with ungodly companions and practices, but to come out from among them, and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing; it is impossible to obey these injunctions and serve in war. Every Christian man is bound, to the utmost of his ability, to be a preacher of righteousness, peace, universal brotherhood, meekness, gentleness, forgiveness of injuries, and love to enemies; but how is it possible for him to be this, while his own practice is a direct contravention of the principles he must inculcate?

There surely can be no difficulty in saying what is a Christian man's duty, when required to assume a position so obviously at war with all the principles of his profession. His duty is at once to say, "I cannot, dare not, must not. The character I am charged to cultivate, the duties I am told to perform, the principles by which I am to act, all alike forbid it; and, whatever the cost, I cannot do it."

4. *To serve in war is to league one's self with a system which opposes the operation and diffusion of New Testament principles.* It is the native tendency, and a part of the mission of

Christian principles to destroy war, and spread universal peace. This is, we believe, an acknowledged truth, at least we have never heard of its being called in question. The pictures drawn by inspired writers, of the time when the kingdoms of the world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, are pictures of a period of unbroken tranquillity. "In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth." (Psl. lxxii. 7.) "And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (Isaiah ii. 4; see also Isaiah xi., and Mich. iv.)

Now it appears a mere truism to say that Christianity, however dominant it may become, can really put an end to nothing but what is essentially opposed to its principles and spirit. None suppose that it will loosen the roots of civilization, art, science, a healthy literature, national government, or the office of civil magistrate. Indeed it must be admitted, that whatever Christianity inevitably destroys, must be essentially antagonistic to

it. But Christianity will inevitably destroy all war ; therefore, all war must be essentially antagonistic to it.

Admit this conclusion—and it seems irresistible—and we shall be forced to confess that war waged, on any pretence, by a professedly Christian people, tends to lower the tone of the Christianity they profess, misrepresent its nature, compromise its purity, oppose the natural action of its principles, and cast a stumbling-block in the way of its progress. Can we for one moment suppose that the New Testament will justify a Christian man in abetting a system so hostile to itself? Or that it leaves the question of his duty in such circumstances undecided?

“ But,” it is often urged, “ we are not in the Millennium yet, consequently cannot act on principles which will only be universally received *then*.” Why not? Will those principles be more than Christian? Will there be any change in the New Testament laws? On the contrary, those laws will remain to the end, just what they are to-day. Whatever Christians will be in the Millennium, they are bound to be now.

Then, again, when and how will the Millennium be brought about, if those who

profess Christianity cannot act on Christian principles till all the world is prepared to act on the same? And what should we think of a professedly Christian man who should plead the impossibility of being just to his fellows, because they were not just to him and to one another?

But the objection here frequently takes a new form; it is said, "In the Millennium, defensive war, which is the only war pleaded for, will be impossible, simply because the universal prevalence of Christian principles will prevent aggression, (just as the punishment of thieves will be impossible, because there will be no thieves to punish,) not because resistance to aggression is wrong, but because there will be no aggression to resist." But this is, in effect, to say that when the principles of the New Testament are universally respected, nations will only be in the same position they are in now. On this theory the Millennium may be characterized from beginning to end by wars as savage and brutal as those of the last five hundred years; and it is hard, indeed, to understand in what the peace principles of the New Testament are superior to those professed now by every civilized nation: for is



not aggression, even now, everywhere repudiated, condemned? What nations now make aggressive war? One and all they scorn the imputation. They are careful to declare that they act only on the defensive. One party fights to redress some wrong or gain some supposed right, and calls Heaven to prosper its righteous cause; and the opposing party resists under the same plea and with the same appeal to Heaven. Each anathematizes the other as the aggressor, and tries to fasten on its opponent the odious charge of having caused the strife. Here then obtains among civilized nations, even now, an almost universal condemnation of offensive warfare. If, therefore, Christianity goes no further, if it justifies defensive war, or only condemns aggressive, it must always leave the nations in pretty much the same position they are in now, and it is difficult to understand how the universal diffusion of its spirit and principles can secure permanent and universal peace. If international misunderstandings may be possible in the Millennium—and they may—then such misunderstandings may be settled as they are to-day, by appeal to the sword. This conclusion will, doubtless, be resisted; but we are unable to appreciate the force of

anything brought against it, unless the whole point be conceded, that Christianity is essentially antagonistic to all war, and forbids all. This point we maintain, and we more than suspect that even those who claim the support of Christianity for defensive war, expect that somehow it will ultimately spread universal and permanent peace, not simply by prohibiting aggression, but equally by imbuing men with its pacific spirit of love, brotherhood, forbearance, self-sacrifice, and forgivingness; and by impressing them with the duty of settling their misunderstandings amicably; and that even now it is operating toward this consummation.

But, if this be the mission and native tendency of Christianity, then he who is responsible for war, *or who, in any way, aids and abets it*, is also responsible for embarrassing the operations, retarding the progress, and opposing the natural outworking of the principles of the Gospel. We are bound to say, decisively, that no Christian man ought to be found in such a position; and if required to occupy it, by whomsoever, he ought to refuse it at any cost.

5. While, as we have previously said, we recognize the magistrate's authority to rule,

and the Christian's duty to obey, yet we must add that Scripture teaches that, *to the Christian man there can be no law to supersede the laws of Christ*. Those of the magistrate are binding upon him only so long as they are consistent with entire loyalty to his Heavenly ruler. He ought to "honour the king," and respect the laws of his country; but in all cases these must give place to the superior authority and claims of Heaven. He ought always to obey God rather than men. When "the powers that be" require what God forbids, the Christian has a Divine sanction for non-compliance. Nor can he be a consistent follower of Jesus unless he acts upon it. He is guilty of exalting man into the place of Jehovah, and human law above the Divine. When, therefore, a Christian man is commanded by the magistrate to wear weapons and serve in the wars, the New Testament will not only support him in refusing, but make it a positive duty at once to say, "The Master forbids it, I therefore cannot do it," and to accept with cheerful patience the penalty of his Christian steadfastness.

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Our work is done. We have spoken out our honest convictions, and endeavoured to show that they are founded on the utterances of the oracles of God. If we have spoken with anything like harshness, we regret it. It has been painful to be obliged to charge the received creed of a large portion of Christ's church with being erroneous; but we have been constrained to do it, by the conviction that the time has come when our standards of orthodoxy must and ought to be submitted to the test of searching, sanctified criticism, and purged from all that is unchristian.

We know and regret the unpopularity of the principles we have been advocating, but we rejoice in the fact—patent to every observer—that this is being rapidly changed. We look hopefully to the time, not far distant, when Christians will be willing to “try Christianity;” and a nation (like England) of professed adherents of the Christian religion, will recognize its duty to wash its hands for ever of the curse of war, and become a nation of peace-makers.

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